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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the feasibility of group meetings of Head Start mothers that are focused on understanding of one's self and of others. A Parent Awareness Program was developed for use with two groups of Head Start mothers over a 27-week and a 17-week period, respectively. Specific objectives were that mothers would (1) become more aware of the needs and feelings of others, (2) develop a greater awareness of themselves, including an understanding of their strengths, assets, and the effect of their behavior on others, and (3) learn explicit techniques to improve communication skills that would in turn result in better interpersonal relationships. Two Parent Educators took the role of facilitators for the informal group discussions in helping the mothers try out new ways of handling problems and of expressing themselves in the group session. Focuses of the discussions included parent-child relationships; methods of discipline; communication skills; self-knowledge; marital status; heterosexual relationships; drug, alcohol, and glue-sniffing addiction; and racial feelings. When appropriate, the Parent Educators introduced audio-visual media, handouts, and role-playing exercises to expand discussion. The sustained level of participation and the favorable reactions to the program reported by the parents and staff indicated that a parent awareness program is feasible for this population. (Author/DR)

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University of Hawaii
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Final Report

A Feasibility Study of Parent Awareness Programs

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November 1969

I. Objectives

The general purpose of this feasibility study of a parent awareness program was to explore the effectiveness of group process methods with two groups of Head Start mothers . Desired outcomes of the program were that mothers would: (a) become more aware of needs and feelings of others, including their children; (b) develop a greater awarenesss of themselves, their pattern of reacting, their needs and expectations, their strengths and assets, and the effect of their behavior on others; and (c) learn explicit techniques to improve communication and facilitate positive interpersonal relationships.

II. Description of Sample Groups

A. Recruitment

The two groups of mothers were recruited from the University of Hawaii Preschool (hereafter referred to as Group I) and the Harris Memorial Church Preschool (Group II). The plan was to pay each mother $3.00 per meeting to compensate her for expenses of transportation, baby-sitting, or loss of income incurred during attendance at the meeting.

At specially called meetings for the mothers of these classes, the staff discussed the proposed program in full. Those mothers wishing to join signed up for the 16-week program. A few joined later after being recruited by active participants.

B. Demographic Characteristics of Mothers

Group I mothers originated mainly from Papakolea and Kalakaua Housing. The Group II mothers resided at Mayor-Wright Housing and the surrounding Palama-Kalihi area. The mothers were predominantly part Hawaiian, but included in the groups were a mother of Chinese ancestry, two of Filipino background, and two Caucasians. Most of the mothers were in their early twenties, but the age range extended through the forties. The number of children per mother ranged from two to eight. The groups included a high number of welfare recipients. This was true particularly for those who were divorced or unmarried or who had large families.

C. Number of Sessions and Attendance

Group I was scheduled to meet for 16 two-hour sessions from October 23, 1968, to February 26, 1969. Following an evaluation session on March 5, 1969, this group met for an additional 11 sessions from March 12 to June 4, 1969, in response to mothers' interest in continuing the program.

Average attendance per session for Group I in the initial 14 meetings was 7.4, with a low of five and a high of 10. Attendance improved in the final 11 meetings, with an average per session of 9.3, and again a range of five to 10.

Group II met in 17 two-hour sessions between January 12, 1969, and June 3, 1969. Average attendance during this period was 8.4, with a low of five and a high of 13.

Both groups remained fairly stable in composition and approximated the desired quota of 12 members. Two factors that apparently contributed to the stability of the groups were the sign-up sheets at the time of recruitment, which tended to commit the members to the program, and the frequency of the meetings, which strengthened individual commitment and generated group cohesiveness.

D. Physical Setting

Group I mothers met for the initial 17 sessions in a crowded office. Seating arrangement around a rectangular table prevented visual contact among all participants. For the final 11 sessions, the mothers met in the living room of a staff member, and they sat on cushioned furniture or on the floor in a circle. The pleasant and informal atmosphere of the setting appeared to induce spontaneity and freer communication.

Group II mothers met in a large room adjacent to the Head Start classes. The spaciousness of the room offset some of the disadvantages of sitting at a rectangular table. However, its proximity to the Head Start classes was disadvantageous because of distractions.

Children below Head Start age who accompanied their mothers presented a moderate amount of disruption. A pooled baby-sitting service was discussed early in the program but never successfully developed.

III. Description of Meetings

A. Group Goals

The focuses of the group were mainly: (1) learning to express honest feelings directly to others; (2) learning to listen to both the content and the feelings of what others express and to give some sort of appropriate feedback to be sure there is real understanding; (3) trying out different ways of acting and reacting toward others; (4) trying to treat children with love and respect rather than keeping them under complete control; (5) expressing true feelings to others in a nonthreatening way and accepting feelings of others in a nonjudgmental way; (6) using the group support to encourage new kinds of trial behavior outside the group that might result in better interpersonal relations; and (7) increasing awareness of nature

and learning to enjoy immediate surroundings more.

B. Role of Program Staff or Parent Educators (P.E.'s)

The role-image that a staff member attempted to impart was not so much that of a teacher as of a friend and fellow group member sharing mutual responsibilities. The mothers did not know the staff by professional titles. (The term "parent educator" or P.E. is selected primarily for reporting purposes.) The mothers called the P.E.'s initially by surnames and later by first names.

At first, as the group discussed personal and family problems, they looked to the program staff for specific answers and directions. The P.E.'s attempted not to assume the role of authority but tried to guide the mothers to listen to each other or draw upon their own individual resourcefulness for solutions.

Two staff members with experience in group therapy, sensitivity training, and group work with adults were assigned to work with each group of mothers. For Group I's last 11 sessions, a third staff member with similar qualifications joined the group. She also happened to be the owner of the home at which the group met, so the mothers accepted her as a natural addition.

C. Group Atmosphere

The meetings were designed to be as informal as possible to help the group feel relaxed and able to explore any area, thought, or feeling. Only in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and friendship could individuals feel free to bring personal feelings to the group for exploration. The group could decide at any time what direction it would take. All agreed to try to be really honest, to be accepting of feelings of others, and to consider the consequences of various assumptions, attitudes, directions, and actions in a nonjudgmental way. What was said in the group was to remain confidential. The meetings were not to be occasions for collecting gossip. The mothers wanted to explore feelings and actions and to learn from this exploration. This willingness to be exposed took time to achieve.

D. Group Process

In the beginning sessions, each mother presented herself to the group in her most favorable light. Several sessions took place before group members really admitted having serious problems. This was achieved when the mothers discovered that they were each trying to cope with multiple problems that were not unique. As they began to empathize with each other, they could see the advantage of viewing a problem from another perspective. In that way, many more alternatives could be considered and explored as emotional involvement was lessened. Many expressed the feeling of shame at being unable to speak

well or to arrange their lives so that they felt self-sufficient and free of overwhelming problems. Many did not have husbands or any close adult friend or family to whom they could talk honestly about problems. The most important discovery for many was that talking to the group about how they were feeling was, in itself, therapeutic.

The members began to appreciate each other, to feel good about strengths and to sympathize with weaknesses, and to laugh often. Once this feeling of group support and closeness was achieved, various members brought more serious problems to the group and deeper feelings were released. As this happened, less structure was required for the meetings. The group began to assume more of the responsibility for its own direction.

E. Content of Sessions

Although each of the two groups evolved independently, they both included discussion of some or all of the following topics: communication skills, parent-child relationships, self-knowledge, marital status, heterosexual relationships, concerns induced by socioeconomic status, responsibility, increasing enjoyment of life, drug addiction, smoking, alcohol, glue-sniffing, morality in general, and racial feelings.

Parents were encouraged to bring in any articles they came across pertaining to parent-child relationships. Several brought in newspaper or magazine articles. The topics included discipline, safety-check list, and Head Start activities (see Appendix 2a). Whenever resource materials were considered helpful in illustrating a point or expanding discussion, they were introduced. (Appendix 1a, 1b, 2c)

In response to requests from parents, a list of questions children often ask about sex and some suggested answers that might be appropriate was compiled, discussed in the group, and distributed (see Appendix 2b). Parents asked for some information about normal development of children. Handouts were provided from Gesell and Ilg describing children's behavior and the development of skills from birth through age five (see Appendix 2e).

The problem of discipline was a recurring one for both groups. Some excerpts from Ginott's Between Parent and Child were mimeographed and used for discussion and handouts (see Appendix 2d). Different philosophical approaches to child rearing were considered, along with examples of both constructive and destructive ways of handling children. Stress was placed on approaches to help the child express his feelings and control his conduct.

Just before vacation recess, parents were provided with Suggestions of Creative Activities to keep children occupied

during vacation. All the suggestions were activities using materials children could do something with. Most required little or no adult help (see Appendix 2c).

In addition to mimeographed reprints, films, and tapes, the P.E.'s introduced various types of group exercises for practice sessions to help build communication skills. Some of these exercises are summarized below:

1. Arrangement of group in pairs for exercise in listening for feelings and in sending clear messages.

2. Focus on "here and now feelings"--balloons experiment (flowing, feeling, breaking balloons with accompanying verbalizations).

3. "Touch and trust responsibility"--blind walk exercise in pairs.

4. Group of three to four members plan imaginary outing, followed by study of roles assumed by each mother and type of contribution she made.

5. Completing checklist of authoritarianism, with discussion of implications in different forms of controls that parents use.

6. Self-concept check--individual described herself, followed by feedback from group.

7. Understanding of self--group divided in pairs; each individual was asked to discuss the type of person she is, the type she would like to be, personal assets and liabilities, what or who influenced her most, how others saw her. Partners in turn described their respective teammates to group, based on what was reported in the paired discussion.

IV. Analysis of Data

A. Limitation in Evaluation

This project has the natural limitations of a small-scale feasibility study, in that no clearly defensible conclusions as to the efficacy of the treatment under consideration could have been expected. The major purpose of the project was to test whether the treatment could be applied with mothers of Head Start children, not to explore in depth how effective such treatment might be in comparison with no treatment or other treatments. Without much larger numbers of parents in similar groups and of P.E.'s in similar situations, and without a control group (recognizing that random assignment to the treatment would be next to impossible),the extent to which the parent awareness program, rather than other factors,

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was responsible for the changes reported is unknown. Very tentative evaluation has relied heavily on data gathered from the participants themselves, including subjective reports of their experiences; information on what, if any, changes they observe in each other; reports on how they would respond to hypothetical problem situations involving their Head Start children; and a post-session telephone interview with a limited sample of mothers. The marked weaknesses inherent in self-reporting and personal judgment, as well as in conclusions based upon a small sample of parents and P.E.'s using single treatment, are emphasized.

Interviews were conducted in a post-session period with a variety of persons, including available Head Start Center and CAP staff.

B. Group I Evaluation Session--UH Preschool Group (3/5/69)

At the conclusion of the 16-week program, seven mothers present were asked in the meeting to tell how the program had influenced them. The participants also were asked to comment on each member's behavior and changes that they had observed.

1. Mothers' Observations of Changes in Themselves

The most frequent change reported by the mothers was an improved relationship with their children. This was attributed primarily to their substituting talking for hitting in disciplining or attempting to influence their children. A few mothers reported feeling remorseful and guilty whenever they fell into their old patterns of hitting the children. Two out of the seven mothers reported improved relationships because they lessened pressures on their children to achieve in the Head Start classroom and could allow them to grow at their own pace.

The next most frequently reported change was improvement in self-confidence. Several mothers reported being able to speak up and contribute opinions or questions, whereas previously they felt too shy or believed that what they had to say was unimportant.

Two mothers reported improvement in their relationships with adults, one with her husband particularly. She reported that she no longer kept to herself feelings that should be shared with him and that this had prevented explosive arguments.

Another mother mentioned that she was able to overcome depression when she listened to other mothers discussing similar personal problems. This de-emphasized a

self-pitying tendency as well as helped her to realize that she was not a worthless, unfortunate individual because of the problems in which she was immersed.

2. Mothers' Observations of Changes in Other Members

Though opportunity was open to all seven mothers to comment on changes or behavioral observations as each mother described herself, only the more vocal members--a little over half of the group--contributed opinions. The change most frequently expressed was that mothers in the group had become more verbally responsive and approachable. Reasons given for the impression of non-responsiveness and nonapproachability were shyness, lack of confidence, and appearance of sassiness. Two mothers were described as being too talkative and "nosey and blunt" at the time of the March evaluation. This would have some effect on the ease with which others could approach them. However, responsiveness and approachability are reciprocal, and what the observer mothers saw as growth in their fellow members may have been related to changes in their own attitudes, perspectives, and freedom to encounter others. There was encouragement from the group process itself, which was designed to help members relate to each other more freely and openly.

C. Group II Evaluation Session--Responses to Problem Situations Involving Head Start Children

On May 20, 1969, nine members attending the Group II parent meeting were administered a questionnaire consisting of six problem-situations involving categories of disrespectfulness-disobedience, tantrums-yelling, fighting-teasing, lying, and personal carelessness. These categories were the ones with which Oahu Head Start mothers were most concerned, based on a fall, 1968, survey.[1]

The eight Head Start mothers[2] relied upon control of behavior through spanking, slapping, threats, scoldings, and guilt-provoking statements more commonly than through constructive responses. Twenty-six items were checked in the physically and psychologically punitive type of control method, compared with 12 for constructive responses. This finding appears to support the statements of some of the Group II mothers that, though they had gained in knowledge of child behavior and awareness of children's needs, their actual behavior towards their children had not changed greatly. In contrast, the Group I mothers reported feelings of guilt and remorse whenever they slapped or spanked their children and, in a few cases, felt that they had been able to avoid use of spanking and slapping. Since Group I mothers had participated in the program for a total of 27 sessions as compared

with 17 for Group II, the development of guilt and actual behavior change reported in Group I may be attributed in part to the longer involvement in the program. See Table 1.

D. Comparison of Classroom Volunteer Hours Between Participant and Nonparticipant Mothers

Mothers responding to the invitation to participate in a parent awareness program were more active in the Head Start program to begin with than mothers who did not enroll in the parent program.

Mothers in the parent awareness program, hereafter referred to as "participant mothers," showed regular and increasing involvement in the Head Start class program with a substantial increase in the number of volunteer hours recorded in the second semester. In contrast, during the second semester, the volunteered time for nonparticipant mothers declined. See Table 2.

It is reasonably certain that participation in the parent program helped somewhat to encourage mothers to volunteer more in the classroom and to participate in other Head Start activities. Since the parent awareness sessions were scheduled weekly, it was convenient for mothers assuming leadership responsibility to delegate tasks and also to hold planning meetings of their own before or after the sessions. This encouraged further involvement and commitment on the part of mothers who otherwise would have had to be specially contacted.

In both groups, a few mothers stated in the second semester that they were contributing volunteer time well over the group average in order to qualify themselves better for employment as classroom or community aides in the Head Start program. Inspection of proportionate volunteer hours contributed by parents in all Oahu classes reveals that Group I mothers were the most active.

E. Post-Session Interviews with Head Start and CAP Staff

1. Social Workers

In May, when asked what she saw as the greatest change, if any, in the participant mothers, the Group I's social worker reported that (a) the mothers were not fearful of the preschool staff and other individuals in positions of authority as appeared to be true earlier in the year; and (b) the mothers were more verbal, friendly, and open in revealing their thoughts and feelings.

In addition to the classroom volunteer experience, another significant activity involving about half of the parent awareness group was a weekly informal discussion

session held in the social worker's office. Attendance was on a "drop-in" basis, with no regularly scheduled session time. Whenever two to three mothers gathered, discussion topics ranged from such practical matters as roach control to more serious problems involving domestic situations and ways of handling children. Six of the mothers mentioned were members of the parent awareness group and comprised the more verbal and active members. The social worker cited these experiences to show that there was a carry-over of interest in learning new responses to child-rearing problems outside the group sessions.

Though the Group II social worker had not conducted any formal inquiry about the parent awareness program, whatever comments she heard volunteered by the mothers were favorable, as reported in personal and telephone interviews in June. Through specific requests by several participating mothers at the close of the school year, a new year-long mothers' club was organized in their own neighborhood that would include a parent awareness group approach within the program.

The social worker reported that the mothers had become much more aware of their own as well as other people's problems and that they were more frank and open in their relations with the teachers and others.

2. Teacher--Group II

The teacher's impression was that the mothers looked forward to their weekly parent awareness meetings. She noted that (a) the mothers had become more independent in their roles as classroom volunteers and were better able to handle unexpected situations; (b) they appeared more responsible and happier; and (c) though a few mothers continued to use spanking and rough scolding in disciplining the children, some mothers now substitute talking for spanking.

3. Community Aide--Group II

The community aide worked closely with the Group II mothers. She observed that (a) between January and June there was an increase in the amount of time volunteered for the Head Start classes, the mothers being more responsive to calls for help and more approachable (they worked constructively together in undertaking three fund-raising projects, in sponsoring excursions for the children, and in holding a successful graduation party for all family members, friends, and Head Start staff); and (b) the participant mothers became less afraid to talk up in groups and could express themselves.

She recommended that another parent awareness group be formed to help other mothers become involved as classroom volunteers and community participants.

Of the 10 Group II mothers who attended meetings regularly, eight were holding one or more community positions associated with the Head Start or other CAP-related programs as of July, 1969. Some of these positions were non-compensatory, others paid. Most positions were assumed after January, 1969, with several developing in June, 1969.

F. Follow-up Interviews with Group II Mothers

Telephone interviews were held in July with six mothers who had participated in the parent awareness program. Some could not be contacted because of no phone, having moved, or then being employed full-time.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for open-end responses. Though the sampling of six mothers is small, the answers elicited provide a qualitative picture of participants' reactions as they viewed the parent awareness program and their Head Start experience.

The main questions asked, with an analysis of responses, follow:

1. Since your child has been in Head Start, have you been more able to understand the needs and feelings of your family, particularly with respect to the children?

Most of the mothers responded positively, saying that their understanding of children's behavior had influenced them to become more patient and to listen to what their children were needing at the moment. Their increased patience had helped to reduce yelling and spanking. One mother reported taking privileges away as a means of discipline and finding this more effective than spanking.

Another mother (with a history of psychiatric hospitalization) was fearful that increased knowledge and understanding of her children had made her "too soft" to the point of "overspoiling." She felt "more pity" for them and believed this led them to take advantage of her. However, she reported enjoying her children more than she had a year ago.

2. In what ways do you see changes in yourself?

Responses were varied from that of a mother who focused the discussion on her son rather than herself to that of another who felt she was more aware of herself, her needs, and strengths but had not changed much in behavior to correct or improve herself.

Another mother had found relief in sharing her personal-family problems with the group. She felt she had kept herself in a shell previously and appreciated the new group of friends.

A mother who impressed the P.E.'s as being confident and self-possessed said that previously she had known herself fairly well and had been able to pursue the goals she sets up, so that she had not gained noticeably in the area of further self-understanding.

3. In rating how you felt about yourself in September, 1968, and now, would you say you feel better, the same, or worse about yourself?

All six mothers indicated that they felt better about themselves. They attributed this to feeling that they had achieved some personal growth, had improved relations with their children, and developed better feelings about themselves through the making of friends in the mothers' group with whom they could share mutual feelings and problems.

4. By what techniques or in what ways have you learned to deal more effectively with problems of your children?

Although most mothers felt that they had gained in this area, they were not able to pinpoint specific techniques or ways. Some had answered this question previously in citing how their increased understanding of children's behavior and needs made them more patient and less apt to spank their offspring. Others indicated they were engaging in more recreational-educational activities with their children, including reading books, arranging for arts-crafts work at home, fishing, swimming, and setting up household chores as fun-type games.

One mother reported being alert to how her children were affected by what she said and did as long as she attended the weekly mothers' group. She felt that she was conscientiously practicing new skills and techniques with benefit to herself and the children. However, once she took a full-time job and her attendance slackened, she found her practice lagging behind what she had learned and considered worthwhile. She felt the need to maintain regular contacts with a similar mothers' group to continue effective child-care practices.

G. Summary of Gumpgookies Results

Gumpgookies is an experimental test developed at the University of Hawaii (Dorothy C. Adkins and Bonnie L. Ballif) designed to measure motivation to achieve in school. A preliminary 100-item form was available in the fall of 1968, and its applicability to children of age four or even younger was still a matter to be explored. It was clear that the cognitive difficulty of the items might be too great for some of the younger children, especially those from homes of a low economic level.

The Gumpgookies test was administered to the Head Start children of the participants in the two parent awareness groups as well as to their mothers. The mothers were instructed to respond as they thought their children would. Their responses, however, undoubtedly reflected not only their perception of their children's motivation but also, to some extent, their own ambitions for their children.

None of the correlations of these data was significant. The number of pairs was of course extremely small. Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange to give the test to the children at the end of the program. Hence the degree to which the children's scores might have been changed and whether or not they changed in the same direction as the mothers' scores are not ascertainable. A comparison of the pre-test and post-test correlation between mothers' and children's scores would have been interesting.

The findings would not necessarily mean that either the parents' perceptions of or their ambitions for their children had changed or that they had not changed. If the test was measuring motivation of the parents to any extent, it should be noted that such a trait in adults ordinarily would not be expected to alter markedly in a short time. The mothers may have become more realistic in their aspirations for their children. Moreover, evidence of increased motivation of the mothers was observable in other directions, such as increased amount of classroom participation and of involvement in community affairs.

During the course of this project, further work has been done with a revised form of the test. It contains a smaller number of items of lower average difficulty. In addition, the format has been altered to lessen the tendency of young children to react on the basis of position preference, picture preference, or primacy versus recency. Additional exploration of its value as a possible criterion measure to evaluate the effectiveness of a parent program would be worthwhile.

TABLE 1

Relation of Type of Behavioral Problems in Eight Head Start Children by Group II Mothers, to Mothers' Mode of Control Reported May 20, 1969*

	Physical Control				Psychological Control				
Behavioral Problem	Spanking, Slapping	Deny Play or Material Privileges	Threatens, Scolds, Yells	Clean up Mess	Rejection	Guilt	Unspecified Punishment	Construc-tive Response	Does Not Apply to Child
Disrespect-fulness Disobedi-ence	4	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
Tantrum Yelling	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	1
Fighting Teasing	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	0
Lying	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Disorder-liness a	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Careless-ness b	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	2	0
TOTALS	14	7	9	4	0	3	3	12	3

*More than one type of mothers' mode of control may be tallied for a child per category, i.e., when mother both spanks and scolds for a given infraction.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Classroom Volunteer Hours
in the 1st and 2nd Semesters
Between Participant and Nonparticipant Mothers

	1st Semester	2nd Semester	
	Mean No. Hrs. Per Mother	Mean No. Hrs. Per Mother	Gain or Loss in Vol. Hrs.
Group I			
Participants	122.6	157.9	+35.3
Nonparticipants	11.2	4.8	- 6.4
Group II			
Participants	71.5	92.7	+21.2
Nonparticipants	22.1	12.0	-10.1

Group I

No. Participant Mothers = 14 in 1st semester; 11 in 2nd semester

No. Nonparticipant Mothers = 10

Group II

No. Participant Mothers = 12

No. Nonparticipant Mothers = 14 in 1st semester; 10 in 2nd semester

Changes in number of mothers resulted from withdrawals, illness, employment. (Omitted from count also were mothers who did not volunteer at all during the year, with no particular reason cited.)

V. APPENDIX

1. Resource materials

a. Books

(1) Carson, R. A sense of wonder. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
(2) Ginott, H. G. Between parent and child. New York: Avon Books, 1965.
(3) Henley, A. Make up your mind. New York: Pocket Books, Inc.
(4) Kahlil, G. The prophet. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966.
(5) Lindbergh, A. Gift from the sea. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1955.
(6) Gesell, A. and Ilg, F. Infant and child in the culture of today. New York: Harper and Bros., 1943.

b. Films

(1) "Children's Emotions"
(2) "Detached Americans"
(3) "How Babies Learn"
(4) "Jamie--the Story of a Sibling"
(5) "Palmour Street"
(6) "Parents to Children about Sex"
(7) "The Mood of Zen"

2. Excerpts adopted from mimeographed papers, newspapers, and other sources

a. Excerpts adopted from Safety Checklist for Parents[1]

In an effort to identify and control hazards to children, the National Easter Seal Society is asking parents to evaluate the way they instill basic obedience to safety rules by answering the following questions, illustrated as follows:

(1) Do I set up reasonable rules for my children to obey?
(2) Do I speak in a firm, calm voice when I want my child to obey?
(3) Do I set an example myself?

These and other questions relating to child safety situations are contained in the new Safety Checklist for Parents, published

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[1] Honolulu Star Bulletin, contributed by Mrs. Geraldine Mahaulu, University Preschool

by the National Easter Seal Society, 2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60612 (single copy free).

b. Excerpts adopted from University of North Carolina School of Public Health, Department of Health Education, Quiz Sheet I. Typical questions on parenthood asked by young children, three to 10 years of age.

Questions		Answers
(1)	Where do babies come from?	From mothers or they grow inside mothers. (Where?) Inside mother's stomach.
(2)	Where do hospitals get babies?	They don't get babies; they help mothers have babies.
(3)	Can I have a baby?	Yes, when you are grown up and married you will be ready. (girl)
(4)	Are there other ways to get babies?	No. (Explain occasional adoption.)
(5)	What are these (breasts) for?	A new baby gets milk from breasts.

c. Excerpts adopted from Some Do-It-Yourself Presents[2]

Box of junk and screwdriver (could include springs, padlocks, and keys, old clocks, radios, zippers, paper clips, etc.); scrap cloth, trims, paste, and scissors; clothespins; spools; buttons; dress-up clothes; old sheets (to put over a small table for a house) and decorating materials such as crayons, paints, paste, and scrap materials; bandaids; pipe cleaners; empty cans; milk cartons; old tires and tubes; kitchen tools; digging tools; string or cord; macaroni; water play toys; paint brushes, etc.

d. Excerpts from "Discipline"[3]

Example: Desirable (after undesirable)
Ursula (at the playground): I like it here. I am not going home now. I am going to stay another hour.
Father: You say you are, but I say you are not.

Such a statement may lead to one of two results, both of them undesirable: defeat for the child or defeat for the father.

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[2]Compiled from a list prepared by Parent Nursery, Berkeley Unified School District.

[3]H. Ginott, Between Parent and Child.

A better approach is to focus on the child's desire to stay in the playground, rather than on her threat to defy authority. For instance, the father could have said, "I see that you like it here. I suppose you wish you could stay much longer, even ten hours. But time is up for today. Now we must go." If after a minute or two Ursula is still persistent, the father may take her by the hand and lead her out of the playground.

A child should not be allowed to hit his parent. An attack should be stopped immediately: "No hitting. I can never let you do that." "If you are angry, tell it to me in words."

Children lie in self-defense. They also lie to give themselves in fantasy what they lack in reality. Lies tell truths about fears and hopes. We should try to understand the meaning of the lie rather than just deny its content or condemn its author.

Differences between old and new approaches to discipline:

> OLD: Parents used to stop undesirable acts but ignored the urges that brought about the acts....
>
> NEW: The modern approach helps the child both with his feelings and conduct....

e. Excerpts from "Attitude of Adult Toward Child"[4]

Instead of striving for executive efficiency, the mother aims first of all to be perceptive of and sensitive to the child's behavior--alertly responsive to his needs. A child is more than a detached individual who must be taken care of at stated clock intervals. He is a living, growing organism, an individual in his own right--cooperation between child and culture is needed, each adapting.

One must understand in what way the child's immaturity must be met and helped. Growth has its seasons and sequences.

We must create the most favorable conditions for his self-regulating and self-adjustment--in areas of motor development, adaptive behavior, language and thinking, and personal and social behavior.

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[4]A. Gesell and F. Ilg, Infant and Child in the Culture of Today.

1st year--gains motor control

2nd year--walks, runs
articulates words
acquires bowel and bladder control
attains a rudimentary sense of personal identity and of personal possession

3rd year--makes sentences, uses words as tools of thought, tries to understand environment and to comply with cultural demands, and so on.

Cultural and creative activities can be used at each level of development. A few sources from which to choose are books, music, painting, blocks, possessions, excursions, holidays and festivals, clay, sand, stones, and water.

f. Excerpts from "How Things Go Wrong"[5]

In many homes storms between parents and children develop in a regular and predictable sequence. The child does or says something "wrong." The parent reacts with something insulting. The child replies with something worse. The parent retorts with high-pitched threats or with high-handed punishment. And the free-for-all is on.

Nathan, age nine, was playing with an empty teacup.

Mother: You'll break it. You are always breaking things.
Nathan: No, I won't.
Just then the cup fell on the floor and broke.
Mother: For crying out loud, you are so stupid. You break everything in the house.

Whether or not Nathan learned to avoid empty teacups was less important than the negative lesson that he learned about himself and his mother.

On seeing her son rolling the cup, the mother could have removed it and directed him to a more suitable substitute, such as a ball.

g. Excerpts from "Role-Playing Ideas"[5]

(1) Carol, age 12, was tense and tearful. Her favorite cousin was going home after staying with her during the summer.

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[5]H. Ginott, Between Parent and Child.

Carol: (with tears in her eyes) Susie is going away. I'll be alone again.
Mother: You'll find another friend.
Carol: Oh, mother! (sobs)
Mother: You are 12 years old and still such a crybaby.
Carol gave her mother a deadly look and escaped to her room, closing the door behind her.

A child's feelings must be taken seriously even though the situation itself is not very serious. Mother might have said any or all of the following: "It will be lonely without Susie," "You miss her already," "It is hard to be apart when you are so used to being together," "The house must seem kind of empty to you without Susie around."

Such responses create intimacy between parent and child. The child feels understood and the parent feels that she understands, and the emotional bond is strengthened between them.

(2) Eric, age nine, came home full of anger. His class was scheduled to go for a picnic but it was raining.... She (his mother) said to Eric:

Mother: You seem very disappointed.
Eric: Yes.
Mother: You had everything ready and then the darn rain came.
Eric: Yes, that's right.

There was a moment of silence and then Eric said, "Oh well, there will be other days." His anger seemed to have vanished and he was quite cooperative the rest of the afternoon....

(3) Leader: Suppose it is one of those mornings when everything seems to go wrong. The telephone rings, the baby cries, and before you know it, the toast is burnt. Your husband looks over the toaster and says: "My God! When will you learn to make toast?"

What is your reaction?
Mrs. A: I would throw the toast in his face!
Mrs. B: I would say, "Fix your own damn toast!"
Mrs. C: I would be so hurt I could only cry.
Leader: What would your husband's words make you feel toward him?
Parents: Anger, hate, and resentment.

Leader: Suppose that the situation is the same: the toast is burnt, but your husband says, "Gee, honey, it's a rough morning for you--the baby, the phone, and now the toast."
Mrs. A: I would drop dead if my husband said that to me.
Mrs. B: I would feel wonderful.

Leader: Let's look at a third kind of husband. He looks over the burnt toast and says to you calmly, "Let me show you, honey, how to make toast."
Mrs. A: Oh, no. He is even worse than the first one. He makes you feel stupid.

Our words and attitudes can make a difference in the atmosphere of our home....We need to learn to respond, not just to the event itself, but to the feelings around it.

3. Excerpts from exercises developed by the P. E.

a. Control by praise or punishment

Mothers were asked to indicate how they would respond to problem situations. After each situation, they indicated on an answer sheet whether it is <u>likely</u> or <u>unlikely</u> for them, as parents, to do what is stated.

(1) Physically remove your child from a drum when he refuses to stop banging on it after you have told him it is getting unbearable to you.

(2) Praise your child for being prompt in coming home to dinner.

(3) Scold your six-year-old child if he uses poor table manners in front of a guest.

(4) Offer to give your child some kind of reward for every subject in which he pulls up his grade on his next report card.

b. Problem situations involving Head Start children

(1) Disrespectfulness, disobedience. What would you do if: you asked your four-year-old to put his dirty clothes in the laundry box and he said, "I don't like you, Mommy"?

(2) Tantrum, yelling. What would you do if: you refused to buy a toy for your four-year-old at a store and he cried loudly, stomping his foot and throwing your purse on the floor?

(3) Accidents. What would you do if: your four-year-old spilled a half-quart of milk while pouring some for himself?

c. Communication skills

Mothers were paired and were asked to describe to their partners:

(1) What kind of person I feel I am.

(2) What kind of person I would like to be.

(3) What are my good points or assets?

(4) What are my bad points or liabilities?

(5) My next door neighbor would describe me to a stranger as....

(6) She would describe my children as....

Each mother then introduced her partner to the group and told the group how her partner seemed to feel about herself and how she thought others felt about her.

This exercise stressed the skills of listening to an individual and talking to a group. It was less threatening to talk about someone else to the group than about oneself.

d. Listening for feelings

Some typical messages that children send were given and parents wrote down which feelings were being expressed.

(1) "You don't mean I have to clean up this whole kitchen myself!"

(2) "I'll wear my hair the way I want to."

(3) "Mommy, let me hold your hand when we go in."

e. Sending nonjudgmental, factual messages

(1) The record player is turned on full volume. Parents in the next room cannot hear each other talk.
Typical message: "You should be more considerate of others. Why do you have it so loud?"
Nonjudgmental, factual message: "Dad and I are finding it hard to talk. It bothers us when it is so loud."

(2) The child has picked on his brother all day. He seems unhappy. Mother doesn't know why.

Typical message: "Come on now. Stop annoying your brother or you'll have to go outside by yourself. He's not doing anything to you. You should be ashamed."
Nonjudgmental, factual message: "Something seems to be making you feel unhappy. I would like to help, but I don't know what it is that is really bothering you."

f. Self-concept

A letter from a young boy was read, telling how he felt about always trying to please his parents, teachers, or other authority figures. He was made to feel that he was unimportant. No one cared how he felt. This kind of behavior built up hatred in himself and left him angry and unable to feel good about himself.

This was used to introduce a discussion on children's feelings about themselves--on self-concept.